

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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COME-00 OPIC-03 /091 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7243

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3149

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, PK

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KAMAL HOSSAIN

SUMMARY: DURING A GENERAL CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KAMAL HOSSAIN YESTERDAY, HE TOLD ME THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT RECENTLY IN BANGLADESH-PAKISTAN RELATIONS ALTHOUGH BDG HAD SENT NEW MESSAGE TO ISLAMABAD RECUVRATING THEIR READINESS TO MEET WITHOUT PRECONDITION AND WERE WAITING FOR ISLAMABAD'S REPLY; AND HE SPOKE IN CONSERVATIVELY POSITIVE TERMS ABOUT EVOLUTION OF BANGLADESH'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND SAUDI ARABIA. I SUGGESTED NEED FOR EARLY BDG ACTION TO COMPENSATE AMERICAN COMPANIES WHOSE PROPERTIESHAD BEEN NATIONALIZED; THE FOREIGN MINISTER AGREED BUT WAS NOT CLEAR WHERE THE MATTER STOOD IN HIS GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND I HAD AGREED LAST WEEK THAT IT WAS TIME TO GET TOGETHER EVEN THOUGH NEITHER OF US HAD ANY SPECIFIC BUSINESS TO TRANSACT. SO I MET WITH HIM FOR A HALF HOUR IN HIS OFFICE YESTERDAY

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AND, ALTHOUGH LITTLE EMERGED THAT WAS NEW, THE FOLLOWING

POINTS WERE TOUCHED ON:

2. BANGLADESH-PAKISTAN RELATIONS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT RECENTLY IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN. HE RECALLED THAT HE HAD MET WITH THE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE IN GENEVA IN APRIL AND THE LATTER HAD TOLD HIM HE WAS TRYING TO SECURE FUNDS WHICH WOULD MAKE POSSIBLE FURTHER REPATRIATION, AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD RECENTLY HEARD OF A FURTHER REPORT THAT PAKISTAN MIGHT BE WILLING TO DO SOMETHING MORE ON THE FIRST PHASE OF THE REPATRIATION (THIS IS PROBABLY A REFERENCE TO ICRC REPRESENTATIVE'S CONVERSATIONS HERE IN MAY--ISLAMABAD'S 4840). BUT BDG HAD NOT HEARD ANYTHING DIRECTLY FROM PAKISTAN ON THIS SUBJECT. NOR WAS THERE ANY MOVEMENT, HE SAID, ON THE QUESTION OF ASSETS. HE SAID HOWEVER THAT BDG HAD RECENTLY SENT NEW MESSAGE TO ISLAMABAD REITERATING THEIR WILLINGNESS TO MEET WITHOUT PRECONDITION BUT HAD NOT YET RECEIVED ANY REPLY. HE ADDED THAT THEY WOULD PROBABLY ASK THEIR AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON TO REPORT AS WELL TO DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS ON THIS SUBJECT IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

3. RELATIONS WITH CHINA. IN SPEAKING OF CHINA, FOREIGN MINISTER DID NOT GO BEYOND WHAT FOREIGN SECRETARY HAD ALREADY TOLD ME ABOUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS (DACCA'S 2727). FOREIGN MINISTER NOTED THAT THEY HAD NOW OPENED TRADE RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND SAID THEY WERE SATISFIED WITH AMBASSADOR KAISER'S RECENT CONVERSATIONS IN PEKING. HE REFERRED FAVORABLY TO "THIS PATIENT EVOLUTION" OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA AND NOTED THAT THE CHINESE IN TALKING TO AMBASSADOR KAISER HAD MADE AN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO AVOID DISCORD, AS HAD ALSO BEEN THE CASE WHEN HE HAD SPOKEN TO THEIR FOREIGN MINISTER IN NEW YORK LAST NOVEMBER. HE NOTED THAT HE ALSO EXPECTED TO SEE THE CHINESE AGAIN THIS FALL WHILE IN NEW YORK.

4. RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA. WHEN I ASKED IF THERE WAS ANYTHING NEW IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA IN

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VIEW OF HIS RECENT VISIT THERE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT THIS ALSO LOOKED POSITIVE. HE SAID HE HAD MET WITH KING KHALED AND OTHER SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND, ALTHOUGH HE HAD NOT INTENDED TO BROACH THE SUBJECT OF THEIR BILATERAL RELATIONS SINCE HIS VISIT WAS TO CONVEY A MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE, THE KING HAD HIMSELF RAISED THE SUBJECT IN A FRIENDLY WAY. WHILE THE FACT THAT BANGLADESH WAS A SECULAR

STATE HAD FIGURED IN PAST DISCUSSIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA, ON THIS OCCASION THE SAUDIS HAD NOT MENTIONED THE PROBLEM. HE POINTED OUT THAT HE WOULD BE GOING AGAIN TO JIDDA NEXT MONTH TO ATTEND THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTER'S CONFERENCE.

5. BANGLADESH AID GROUP. I EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE PRELIMINARY ECONOMIC REFORM MEASURES WHICH THE BDG HAD TAKEN. I SAID THAT WE HAD TRIED, IN RESPONSE, TO BE FORTH-COMING AT THE BANGLADESH AID GROUP MEETING IN PARIS AND REVIEWED SOME OF THE RESULTS OF THAT MEETING WITH HIM. HE SAID THAT HE HAD FOUND THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING ENCOURAGING AND WENT ON TO EMPHASIZE HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS TO BANGLADESH'S DEVELOPMENT TO KEEP A HIGH LEVEL OF COMMODITIES FLOWING INTO THE COUNTRY OVER THE COMING MONTHS. I SAID THAT WE WERE ALSO INTERESTED IN THE FURTHER ECONOMIC REFORM MEASURES THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN.

6. COMPENSATION FOR AMERICAN COMPANIES. I TOLD THE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT ALTHOUGH HIS GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN SOME POSITIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE THE INVESTMENT ATMOSPHERE, ITS CONTINUED FAILURE TO PAY COMPENSATION WITH RESPECT TO THE AMERICAN COMPANIES THAT HAD BEEN NATIONALIZED WAS STILL A DEPRESSANT ON THE CLIMATE FOR AMERICAN INVESTMENT. I SAID THAT I UNDERSTOOD THAT A POLICY RECOMMENDATION WAS BEFORE THE CABINET AND URGED HIM TO HELP MOVE IT ALONG. HE AGREED THAT THIS STEP SHOULD BE TAKEN AND SAID THAT THE DECISION IN PRINCIPLE HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE THAT THIS SHOULD BE DONE. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHERE THE MATTER NOW STOOD IN THE GOVERNMENT AND, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A CABINET MEETING THE NEXT DAY, HE WAS NOT SURE THIS ITEM WAS ON THE AGENDA.

7. AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SIDDIQI'S TRAVEL PLANS. THE
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FOREIGN MINISTER EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT THE RECEIPT OF THE AGREEMENT FOR AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE M.R. SIDDIGI. HE NOTED THAT SIDDIGI ALREADY HAD A WIDE CIRCLE OF GOOD FRIENDS IN WASHINGTON AND SAID THAT HIS APPOINTMENT HAD BEEN IN THE MILL HERE FOR A LONG TIME BUT HAD NOT BEEN POSSIBLE UNTIL RECENTLY BECAUSE OF SIDDIGI'S FAMILY CONSIDERATIONS. HE SAID THAT SIDDIGI EXPECTED TO PROCEED TO WASHINGTON AT THE END OF AUGUST.

8. FOREIGN MINISTER'S TRAVEL PLANS. IT EMERGED DURING THE MEETING THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WHO SPENT MORE THAN THREE OF THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THE YEAR ABROAD, HAS EXTENSIVE TRAVEL PLANS FOR THE REST OF THE SUMMER AND FALL. HE WILL GO TO THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE IN JIDDA IN JULY, WILL ATTEND THE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN MINISTERS

IN LIMA IN LATE AUGUST, WILL PROCEED DIRECTLY FROM THERE TO
THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL SESSION IN NEW YORK, EXPECTS TO
TRAVEL TO A FEW OTHER PLACES FOLLOWING THE SPECIAL SESSION,
AND RETURN FOR THE UNGA SESSION DIRECTLY FROM THAT TRAVEL.
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